

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Chattanooga vs NC State

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Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

Chattanooga Mocs Coach Shawn Poppie Addie Grace Porter Jada Guinn

Media Conference

Q. AG, how necessary have these past few weeks been off after the SoCon Tournament, especially for you?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: I think it's been good for us to just focus on ourselves, get some practice. Not going too hard but still getting enough in to where we're staying in shape.

I think it's been a long season as basketball is. We know this for a long time. Just being able to get the rest and recovery that's needed to push us forward on to these next few games.

Q. Jada, I believe you played against Madison Hayes when you were in high school. Obviously matching up against her again. How much are you looking forward to that match-up? And what are you going to take away from the earlier years playing against her to play against her this time?

JADA GUINN: I think it is good that I played against her in high school. Kind of gives me a feel of how she's going to play. But I think as a team we're just ready to play against them. It's nothing personal against her or anything but just ready to get out there and play tomorrow.

Q. Jada, you're obviously one of the best scorers in the country. What are you anticipating from NC State how they're going to try to slow you down tomorrow?

JADA GUINN: We've been watching a lot of film, watching their ball coverages. They like to ice and stuff like that. So they'll probably try to ice. I've seen some hedging, stuff



like that. It's all the things I've seen throughout the years. We'll just see when we get out there tomorrow.

Q. What is your mindset headed into this game in the women's tournament? We don't see as many big upsets in the first couple of rounds as we do in the men's yet, but parity is increasing. What type of mindset, do you embrace the underdog role?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: I think just as women's basketball is growing it's become more and more normal it's going to happen. We were just out there watching the MTSU-Louisville game. It's very possible. I think us going into it we have the mindset that we're going to win. For us it wouldn't be surprising but obviously we're looking to shock the world.

Q. What do you recall as being maybe your most challenging road environment of this season? And how do you think the team handled that?

JADA GUINN: I would probably say our games against Richmond and Coastal early on in the season, like right before conference, I think that was really a turning point for our team. And I think that we handled it well. We kind of hit adversity. We didn't play as best as we wanted to against Coastal. And then we turned around and played a much better game the next game. I think it just allowed us to figure out how to handle adversity.

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: Jada did two losses, so I'll do a game we won on the road, which I guess it was a neutral site because it was the SoCon Tournament. It's not really a "road" road game, but I think just the environment of SoCon Tournament being a championship-type game is something you can lean on, that experience.

And obviously we went and won those three games and just leaning on that and the crowd and everything, it gets a little riled up. The nerves get to you a little bit. So just leaning on that and knowing that we won those games, so we can carry that over here too.

Q. Obviously the state of Tennessee women's basketball is so big there. Do you have any early



memories of watching the Women's NCAA Tournament growing up?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: Not a crazy ton, like one that I can remember this specific moment, but just growing up as a kid watching all the women's basketball games, men's and women's both. I think there's a lot of good memories and something that you always dreamed about getting to play in this tournament because it is such a big thing, March Madness.

It is kind of cool getting to be here and getting to play. But nothing really specific, I guess.

JADA GUINN: I would say there's not a specific game that I remember, but I just always remember watching the March Madness tournament just being something I've always wanted to play in that. And just last year getting to make it to the tournament. It was just like a dream come true.

Q. What can you take from last year's experience and do differently this time?

JADA GUINN: For me, I would say just how we're talking about the crowd, how the crowd is, just the environment, it's different in March Madness. A lot more fans than we're used to. It's a lot louder. I would just say staying in the moment at times, it can seem like it's too big but just focusing in on the moment.

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: I would say the same, too, just knowing that it's another game kind of, which it is a big one but trying to keep that same mindset that it's just another game as much as possible. There's going to be a lot of people. It's going to be loud. But just trying to stay in the moment and focus on what we can control.

Q. You all picked up the big win over Mississippi State in December. What went right in that game for you all? And is there anything from that experience you're taking into the tournament?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: I think that was a big confidence boost for us, honestly, at that point in the season. Just knowing that when we play our basketball and we play like we know how that we can do anything. Doesn't matter if they're bigger, stronger, faster, whatever you can say about that. If we're disciplined, we're tough, we do our thing, we can win a game.

JADA GUINN: To add to that, I think we also learned that we don't have to play a perfect game to beat teams like that. We just executed our game plan and it wasn't like everybody has to be a hero, everybody just had to stick

together and stay to the game plan.

Q. NC State obviously has more size probably than you've seen all year. How do you prepare to go up against that?

JADA GUINN: I would just say scouting. Our coaches have watched a ton, a ton of film. We know they're bigger than us. We know what we need to do. We know we need to box them out and just stick to our defensive game plan.

Q. You probably knew you were going to be sent on the road for the tournament. Were you interested in coming to Raleigh? Is that one of the places you thought would be cool to come to? Or did you have any guesses of where you may be going before the bracket came out?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: If you keep up with the bracketology thing, there were some that sometimes would say NC State, Indiana. I guess NC State was one we thought we maybe could be at. But you never know.

We're just excited to be here and excited to play. Whoever they put us up against we'll be ready to play and ready to come and do what we do. I guess it could have been anywhere, really.

Q. Has it been talked about or were either one of you aware that Wes Moore was the coach at Chattanooga for quite some time?

ADDIE GRACE PORTER: I think it's kind of hard to not know that, just the success that he had at Chattanooga and the legacy that he left and all the championships that he brought Chattanooga. But I think that now we can just look back and thank him for what he did here, but now see what we can do.

JADA GUINN: It's definitely something that's been talked about, Coach Poppie talks about, the legacy of Chattanooga's women's basketball. So it's definitely been brought up. But it's not something that we've just tried to put like all of our focus into.

SHAWN POPPIE: Thank you, guys, for all being here today. We're really excited to be here back in Raleigh, March Madness. Who knows what will happen? Exciting time of the year.

Very, very proud of the group I have down in our locker room, the ones that have really fought for us in the two years we've been here, and really excited to be in Raleigh and see Wes tomorrow. It's been a while, my little history with him and obviously Chattanooga. What a storyline for

everybody. Excited to be here.

Q. Sounds like from some of your players said that you talk about Coach Moore quite often. Is that just the last week or so, is that all the time, and some of the legacy he left there?

SHAWN POPPIE: Obviously a lot more as of this week, probably, than anything else. As I'm sure my kids may have mentioned, in this business, you do a lot of stealing of other people's stuff. He's done such an unbelievable job, we put in a new set a couple weeks ago before the tournament and called it Wolfpack. And here we are in Raleigh. I'm not sure we'll run Wolfpack tomorrow, but we have it in. Made the scout a little bit easier, right?

Obviously when they called our name on Selection Sunday and matched us here in Raleigh, a lot of our fan base got excited as well. He built our program and others, but 13 years, I believe, he was there. A lot of the banners we get to look at every day he was a big, big part of that.

But not only is he a good basketball coach, his legacy of in the sense of in the community, the amount of support, our donors that support us that are still very close with him, it just speaks volume -- not only him as a basketball coach but as a person.

So that was a lot of the talks this week is that we're probably going to hear a lot of storylines behind it, and rightfully so. And then to continue to share his story of why they're hearing that storyline I think is important for them to know. But also know the reality is it doesn't necessarily matter to them as much as we're going to come up here and compete with all we have.

Q. You're obviously familiar with NC State as a program from your time in the ACC. What do you admire about them? What stands out about NC State?

SHAWN POPPIE: Well, they're really talented. You look all up and down the roster, they're very talented. Really I think what I admire is the sense of Coach Moore, he's been the same Wes Moore for as long as I've known him. Even the stuff that they run is not necessarily overly new. It's just that they've got good players running it and he knows how to put them in position and call a game.

It is very familiar to me. My seven years at Virginia Tech we played them twice a year and sometimes three times if you caught him in the ACC Tournament.

And it was my scout most of the time. So it was funny. When my assistants come in the office and they're showing me some actions, and I'm saying, I know the play call if you

need it.

It's still the same stuff. It's just he's got really good players. Again, he puts them in position and changes the flow of the game, and they're very, very hard to guard with how they spread you out.

For him to do it as long as he's done it, I think I saw while watching one game he's had over 800 career wins. That's amazing to not only win that many but even coach in that many games.

Q. The NCAA selection committee obviously likes giving you big narratives in the first round after facing Virginia Tech last year. Can you take anything from that experience to kind of help you this year?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah, absolutely. Kind of back to what I mentioned of why we talked so much about it this week is that last year the storyline was a little bit more emotional for myself being that I had been up there.

And I think that we did a really good job of trying to keep that out of sight, out of mind a little bit as we prepared.

This week I just want to tell them what they're going to hear because it doesn't necessarily hit home to them as much as last year did. And, yes, take the value in it.

But the good storyline is that I'm very familiar with not only this arena but how they've played. And I think we can lean on some of that with knowing last year's opponent and this year's opponent so, so well, just from my time. But I think the emotion side's taken out a little bit this year compared to last year.

Q. I wanted to ask about the arena specifically. Obviously it's one of the louder venues in the country. You have experience coaching here. Has that been a point of emphasis with your team, just how to play in this type of environment?

SHAWN POPPIE: Absolutely. We've played music in our arena very, very loud all week when we could. Some of our later practices, when no one else is in the offices -- we didn't want to mess up administration in some of our morning practices.

But I know there's been a narrative of being a small arena from someone in the local area saying that it's not a big environment, but I've been here and it is unbelievable.

It will be fun for our kids. It's what they deserve to be a part of. Whatever it holds I don't know but you feel it.

And I know our kids are excited, but we're going to have to stay poised because when NC State goes on runs in this building, it becomes hard to keep focused.

And so it's been a point of emphasis. Obviously we try to prepare as much as we could with communication. Loud music is very, very loud in our arena. But when you add the adrenaline and the rush and those -- and adversity, we definitely have our hands full.

But, again, I think with the two that you guys had in here, our leadership is in a place that I think we'll give it again a good run.

Q. Obviously NC State has more size than you guys have probably seen all season. How do you prepare to go up against that? Is there anything different?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah, they're bigger at every position, I think, on the floor, especially the starting group. I think that you've got to try to take advantage on one end with our ability to space the floor. Offensively we led our conference in 3-point field goal percentage and we'll have to shoot the ball well to really space them out.

The more we get them in tighter spaces, their length becomes very, very effective. So that's first and foremost.

Now you flip it on to the other side, again we have been small in our own league all year let alone when you come up against somebody like NC State. It's definitely going to be one of those things. We have to focus on all the little things to try to minimize their space as much as possible.

But they do a good job, again, spacing you out with not only the ability to shoot it but their movement. And so as much as we possibly can -- yes, there's a scouting report to try to get it out of there. If they've dominated the paint points, we're going to be in trouble. And we know that.

Q. Wes mentioned Hannah and her shooting ability. What does it say about her ability as a freshman to shoot the way she does? And how important is it for you guys going into tomorrow?

SHAWN POPPIE: Well, the good news for her, it's not a secret, everyone knows. It's not going to be a surprise when she sees coverage tomorrow. It's been one of them things that she shot the ball and it's become a national thing. If I'm not mistaken she was leading the country at one point in 3-point field goal percentage.

We know how much of a spark she adds to us with the likes of Jada Guinn and Raven Thompson, they need some people to space the floor. She's done a really good

job of that. I think for us we've got to find ways to take advantage. If we all watched Oakland versus Kentucky yesterday and kid hit 10 3s if we took that, we might be all right tomorrow.

Q. Wanted to ask about Jada, she was great for you in the conference tournament, has been great all year. For those not too familiar with her game, what makes her such a special player?

SHAWN POPPIE: It starts outside what no one sees. She's an unbelievable kid and works her tail off. We've been fortunate, if you see her story, she was in the tournament a year ago with Tennessee Tech. And so she has that experience that I think we can rely on along with our returners back here. But for us, she just has been consistent. I think she's had one game all year under 10, and so for us, definitely as a head coach, when she walks through and you know you're going to get more than 10 points, that's a good start.

We found ways to get her into a mid-range pull-up a lot. That's going to be key tomorrow because that size inside is going to be a little different than we've seen. So we're going to have to find ways to get her in there. She's been very efficient when she's got in there all year.

The good news is -- again it's not a ton of NC States, but we've had some competition in our non-conference slate. I'm watching the tournament down there in Richmond who we gave a heck of a run, last I looked was tied with Duke in the third quarter. Kent State we beat down in Thanksgiving. I know it's another mid-major, but they're in the tournament. Marshall is in the tournament. Mississippi State I think was one of the First four out we beat at home. We've got some experience in that non-conference slate that we're going to have to rely on some of those experiences as well, but for her it's to remember the back of what she looked like last year at Indiana and she had spurts there where she was really good for them. We've got to find a way to do the same thing tomorrow.

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